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ABSTRACT

Teachers must continuously appraise student progress in reading achievement. Techniques to facilitate this appraisal include (1) teacher observation, (2) checklists, (3) teacher written tests, (4) criterion referenced tests, (5) standardized tests, (6) rating scales, (7) anecdotal records, and (8) conferences. Once a comprehensive program of appraisal is implemented, learning activities can then be chosen to help students achieve relevant goals and objectives in the reading curriculum. (HTH)

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APPRAISING LEARNER PROGRESS IN READING

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APPRAISING LEARNER PROGRESS IN READING

The teacher needs to appraise pupil achievement continuously in reading achievement. There are numerous techniques to utilize in appraising student progress in reading. Which evaluation procedures might then be utilized to ascertain achievement in learning to read effectively?

Teacher Observation

The teacher needs to observe to notice progress being made by each student in the reading curriculum. Each school day learners reveal successes as well as hindrances in learning to read. What might a teacher observe in terms of learner progress in reading?

1. errors made in phonetic analysis. Thus, the involved learner is not associating sounds with symbols appropriately. The word(s) the pupil is not identifying correctly are consistent between symbol and sound and yet the learner is not making correct grapheme--phoneme associations.

2. errors made in overgeneralizing in phonics. The pupil is attempting to relate graphemes and phonemes when the consistency is not in evidence. Inconsistencies between symbol and sound need to be resolved with the resulting words being learned by sight, not grapheme-phoneme relationships.

3. errors made in word calling rather than reading fluently to comprehend content. The words read are stated in isolated units; thus, reading in thought units or meaningful phrases is not in evidence. Excess struggling to identify isolated words hinders gleaning ideas in the reading curriculum.

4. errors made in not paying attention to punctuation marks. Interpretation of content, as desired by the author, might then be seriously minimized. To read a declarative sentence as an interrogative sentence hinders comprehension of contents, as do omissions of commas, exclamation marks, direct quotes, and direct address.

5. errors in substituting words. Instead of the correct word in context, a pupil subsititutes an incorrect word. Serious comprehension problems may well be a relevant end result.

6. errors in omitting key words. It is no wonder that students then cannot attach meaning to what is being read. Generally, but not always, each word in print is significant to read. An adequate number of words need to be correctly identified for comprehension of content to be in evidence.

7. errors in repeating that which has been read correctly in sequence. A word, phrase, or entire sentence may be reread by the involved student and yet just previously, the content had been read correctly. Generally, the student is attempting to pronounce the new word correctly in the next sentence, if all or part of a previous sentence is reread correctly.

8. errors in hesitating in word identification. The learner takes from two to five seconds but identifies the sequential word correctly. Struggling with word identification hinders in comprehending content. If students spend an excessive amount of time in identifying a word, no doubt, the abstract words are too complex within a textbook or trade book.

9. errors in not being able to identify words. The teacher or a learner who reads well identifies the unknown word to the involved reader. When incorrect word recognition approaches the five per cent level or higher, reading comprehension will suffer.

It is quite obvious that a good reading teacher is a quality observer in evaluating students skills in recognizing words, as well as in comprehending content.

Using Checklists

Some of the observations made by the teacher of a student's progress in reading should be recorded. A checklist can be developed by the teacher to notice learner progress in reading. Thus, on a checklist, the teacher, for example, amy list the following reading behaviors to evaluate if student are realizing objectives:

1. Comprehends factual content while reading.
2. Understands major generalizations.
3. Attaches meaning to sequential content.
4. Follows directions accurately.
5. Develops creative ideas.
6. Analyzes ideas read in terms of being fact or opinion, reality or fantasy, or accurate rather then inaccurate content.
7. Can support main ideas with supporting facts.

Each learner needs to be ready to achieve objectives listed on a checklist. A separate checklist needs to be available for each student.

The name of the student and the date the behaviors were checked need to appear on the checklist. Weak behavior in terms of listed items should be noticed, recorded, and remedial assistance provided.

Teacher Written Tests

Generally, five kings of teacher written tests are recognized to be utilized in evaluating learner learner progress. True-false items exemplify one approach of the five. A student may then read a given selection and be tested in comprehending its contents. The true-false items need to be valid. To emphasize validity, each item must relate directly to the subject matter read. True-false items must be clearly written so that vague items are definitely not in evidence. Reliability, or consistentcy in obtained results, is a problem if vagueness exists in written test items. Why? If the involved student took the same test the second time, the responses, no doubt, would differ from the results of the first administration of the test. If the results differ from the first to the second administration of the same test (test-retest), perhaps, little information is then obtained about the involved student's progress. For example, if a learner obtained 50 per cent of the items correct the first administration of the test and 90 per cent the second administration, with no opportunities to do additional study, the results would be confusing indeed. Securing 50% correct makes it appear as if the student did poorly. But, obtaining 90 per cent right of the total items on the test, makes for a rather good test score.

Multiple choice items may be written by the teacher to ascertain learner progress. Generally, four alternatives are availbale for students to respond to. Each of the four should be plausible or reasonable. Any alternative that is ridiculous can immediately be taken out by the responding student with no previously acquired learning.

In the multiple choice items, each stem should match up as being grammatically correct with individual responses--a, b, c, and d. Otherwise, clues may be in evidence as to which is the correct alternative. The multiple choice items on a test can be utilized to measure student achievement in reading comprehension. Thus, after a student has read a given selection, he/she may take a multiple choice test to notice progress in comprehending content from a given page, several pages, a chapter, or entire unit. The teacher needs to be certain that pupils individually are able to read the test items. Otherwise, the tests will not measure what students have learned.

Completion items, as a third kind of teacher written test, may be utilized to ascertain facts, concepts, and generalizations acquired by learners. Thus, after reading a given selection, the student can respond to a set of completion test items. The teacher needs to be certain that an adequate amount of content is contained in any completion item so that students know what is wanted in terms of responses. With too many blanks in any compltion item, students might not know which responses to write.

Should more than one answer be correct in any blank in a completion test, the teacher needs to give credit where credit is due. The blanks should be congruent in length so that unnecessary cues are not given to students in terms of which response is correct.

A fourth type of teacher written test item is a matching test. To appraise learner comprehension in reading, a learner may match column one with column two. There should be more items in one column compared to the other so that the process of elimination may not be utilized excessively by the learner. In all cases, the student should be taught to initially match items in the two columns of which he/she is certain. More certainty is then involved in matching the rest of the items, column one with column two. If an item from either column can be utilized more that once in

the matching process, this should be made clear to the test taker by the teacher or person professionally responsible for administering the test. Directions for taking any test must be clarified to the learner so that situations are optimal for doing the best possible on appraisal procedures.

A fifth means involves the utilization of essay tests. Learners must have an adequately developed writing vacabulary to respond effectively to essay tests. The essay items need to be delimited so that students know what is wanted in terms of responses. However, there is a point of no return in delimiting responses wanted in essay tests. Thus, a question could be so specific that a factual answer is needed to provide a correct answer. If a factual response is desired, it is better to use a true-false or multiple choice item.

Essay items require the involved student to organize content effectively in order that sequential content is presented within a paragraph or several paragraphs. Major emphasis in appraising essay responses by the teacher (or though teacher-pupil planning) should be placed upon the quality of inherent subject matter. If a teacher wishes to evaluate the correctness of the mechanics of writing, this should be done separately from the quality of ideas presented.

The mechanics of writing include include correct spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and usage, as well as the learner exhibiting legible handwriting. Certainly, it is significant to guide learners individually to make continuous progress in the mechanics of writing.

Using Criterion-referenced Tests

Criterion-referenced tests (CRT) emphasize the use of measurably stated and not general objectives. CRT's can be written by teachers or purchased commercially. The teacher chooses the learning activities to guide learners to attain the measurable ends.

After the learning activities have been utilized, the teacher needs to appraise student progress. Progress is determined by assessing if the student has/has not attained the precise end. It is an either-or situation if a learner has or has not been successful in goal attainment.

The criterion in CRT is the specific, precise objective which each pupil is to attain. The test in CRT is measuring to ascertain if the involved student has or has not achieved the criterion.

CRT need to follow the following standards:

1. the measurably stated ends must be arranged sequentially in ascending order of complexity.

2. each objective should be stated so that it can be determined if a pupil has/has not achieved the desired end. General objectives should not be utilized to determine pupil progress.

3. learning activities chosen by the teacher must contain content which assists students to achieve each measurable objective. No other subject matter or skills need be emphasized in the learning activities selected.

4. tests utilized to measure student achievement should determine if pupils individually have achieved objectives. No other items should appear on the test. For a test to be valid, it must cover what has been taught.

Using Standardized Tests

Standardized tests, also called norm referenced tests, are published by commercial companies, Norm referenced test results spread students out from high to low. Thus, in a given fourth grade, the range of reading achievement from a standardized test may be from grade six to grade two. Thus, a spread of scores is in evidence. Norm referenced tests are developed and written in a manner to have a range of scores from high to low. CRT's are not written to achieve a spread of scores, rather to determine if measurably stated ends are/are not being achieved. The specific end or objective becomes an absolute. Either the learner does or does not achieve the measurable objective.

The question arises: "Why are norm referenced tests written to spread pupils out as to results obtained from taking the test?" Teachers and supervisors in selected situations desire to know how learners in their very own schools compare with students in schievement from other geographical areas and regions. If I am a third grade teacher, how do my pupils compare with learners upon which the norm referenced test was standardized? The students upon which the norm referenced test was standardized needed to have a wide range of scores in terms of results. Thus, in the target group, results were obtained for the average achievement for any grade level. In this way only, students' results from our schools can be compared with the norms provided by students whose results were utilized to standardize the involved test.

When students in our schools are compared with those of the norms in the standardized test, a comparison is made. One learner in the sixth grade may have achieved on the seventh grade level in reading accomplishment, according to the manual of the standardized test. This does not tell us if this is where our learner should be presently in achievement. If the involved student is in the sixth grade at the beginning of a school year measures initial sixth grade reading achievement on the standardized test, the chances are this is where the learner should be achieving, if he/she is of average intelligence and capabilities. Additional appraisal techniques whould be utilized, however, to determine at what specific level of accomplishment the learner actually is and what can be done to emphasize sequential optimal achievement.

Teachers may utilize results of students from standardized tests to improve the curriculum. Thus, if teachers receive knowledge of individual items missed on a test, the identified deficiencies become objectives for students to achieve. The inadequate responses given by

learners should only become goals for student attainment if the teacher deems that relevancy in these learnings is involved.

Standardized tests chosen in reading should be valid. Validity emphasizes that test items cover what has been taught in the classroom. Thus, progress in word recognition, comprehension of content, and vocabulary development items on the norm referenced tests should measure similar objectives stressed in teaching-learning situations. The goals of the standardized test then should harmonize with goals stressed in the school's reading curriculum.

Reliability of any test is important. Thus, if a student took the same test over again without opportunities to study, he/she would receive similar results.

Using Rating Scale

The teacher may rate student progress on a five point scale involving general objectives in reading. Five would be the highest and one the lowest rating given for any one behavior. The following are examples of general reading objectives which may be placed on a rating scale:

1. The pupil recalls facts from ongoing reading materials.
2. The learner is able to follow printed directions.
3. The student can tell in his/her own words subject matter read.
4. The learner is able to develop a generalization and provide supporting facts.

An issue involved in utilizing rating scales to evaluate learner progress involves the following question: Should the ratings be based upon what the involved pupil can reasonably well achieve or should the ratings reflect absolute standards, e. g. a criterion that needs to be applied to each and every student? Certainly, students differ from each other in many ways, including diverse facets of reading progress. And yet, to achieve objective number one above, each learner needs to be at a

minimal level of accomplishment in order to truly state orally selected facts read. The issue becomes clarified if measurably stated objectives are utilized. Thus, the same objective might read: Given a 200 word selection the pupil will answer three of four questions correctly involving the reading of factual content. Sequence in learning must be in evidence.

A question, however still arises: Is it reasonable as a task for a learner to read a two hundred word selection and comprehend questions whereby seventy-five per cent of the facts are recalled accurately?

Rating scales can be duplicated so that each student being rated has a scale of his/her own. The student's name and date should appear on the rating scale. The results can be filed in the learner's own manila folder. When comparing previous with present ratings, progress of individual learners may not be evaluated the same when rating scales are utilized in successive evaluations. The involved teacher may attempt to be increasingly objective by utilizing the rating scale approximately the same time for each appraisal, e. g. 9 a.m. on Tuesday mornings. Also, the teacher needs to utilize additional appraisal procedures, so that one means is a check against other techniques of evaluation. Keeping written records, such as anecdotal statements, assists the teacher in keeping track pertaining to each pupil's progress in reading.

Anecdotal Records

The reading teacher needs to record at selected intervals reading progress of each learner. Forgetting of individual pupil progress can well occur unless achievement of student progress in reading is recorded.

It might appear overwhelming to a reading teacher to write statements about learner achievement in reading, especially with large numbers of students in a classroom. However, if the teacher records items of reading

achievement for two students per day, it does not take long and the rounds have been made once in recording progress for each learner in any classroom.

There are selected criteria to follow in writing anecdotal records at selected intervals for each learner:

1. behavior needs to be written in a factual manner. Record exactly what happened and do not use loaded, vague terms.

2. anecdotal statements should represent a random sampling of each student's behavior. If biased behavior is recorded, only negative or only positive incidents may be recorded at definite intervals of time for each learner.

3. the teacher needs to be aware of possible biased behavior toward some pupils. What is recorded must be objective and fair to the involved learner.

Using Conferences

The teacher may conduct conferences with individuals and small groups to ascertain progress in reading. There are numerous items to discuss with learners in evaluating their achievement. Among others, the following may be discussed with pupils individually and in committees:

1. likes and dislikes of content and topics to be read.

2. problems encountered in identifying new words.

3. difficulties met in comprehending content read.

4. self appraisal of learner progress in reading.

5. pupil-teacher planning in selecting objectives in the curriculum.

6. learner input in selecting learning activities in reading.

7. students aiding in developing unique methods of appraising progress in reading.

8. learner-instructor planning to ascertain means of encouraging the former to do more reading of content, such as utilizing reinforcement tactics to reward reading behavior.

9. new methods recommended in the teaching of reading.

10. diagnosis of individual problems in reading achievement.

Parent-teacher conferences may also be held to improve learner performance in reading. To conduct an effective conderence, the teacher needs to have adequate knowledge of the present achievement level of the involved parent's son or daughter. It is good to have samples of the learner's products in reading, such as completed workbook or wordsheet pages. The teacher needs to reveal positive attitudes toward parants in the conference. Nothing generally is accomplished with negative behavior. The teacher must believe that parents can aid the son or daughter to improve skills in reading. Thus, parents can listen to a child read and read stories to their offspring. They can also discuss stories with their children. The stories may come from basal readers, library books, filmstrips, films and slides.

Parnets need to ask questions of the teacher pertaining to their child's progress in reading. The teacher should answer the questions clearly and concisely in terminology understood by lay persons.

The teacher can learn much from parents in a conference pertaining to the child's interests, attitudes, and abilities in reading. These traits of pupils need to be utilized in developing the reading curriculum for each learner. The teacher needs to use personal interests of students in selecting reading materials for the latter to pursue. Using interesting subject matter for a learner to pursue, can certainly aid achieving positive feelings toward reading. Also, selections used in reading should challenge the optimal use of capabilities of each reader. Thus in conducting parent-teacher conferences, the teacher must be prepared to discuss student progress in reading. It is good to show work samples to parents of their child's progress. An environment in the conference needs to exist wherein both the teacher and parents feel free to develop a curriculum in reading which guides the pupil to achieve in an optiaml manner. An agreement should end the conference whereby both the teacher and parents have knowledge

pertaining to guidance which can be given to the learner to read as well as individual capacities permit.

Additional Appraisal Procedures

There are numerous other methods which might be used to evaluate student achievement in reading.

1. The 100 running word method to ascertain reading levels of individual pupils. Thus, at the beginning of a school year, 100 sequential words should be marked by the teacher in the involved basal textbook. The content should be representative of content contained in the beginning of the textbook. Four questions covering the 100 running words should be written by the teacher. The teacher can have a learner read orally the 100 words in a place where other students cannot hear subject matter being read.

The teacher needs to mark down each word not recognized in reading. A student needs to identify 95 to 98 words correctly as an approximate figure from the 100 running words. Also, three of four questions need to be answered correctly for the textbook to be on the approximate reading level of the involved student. Once word identification skills go downhill from the 95%level, comprehension, no doubt, also will be at a lower level. The pupil might then not attach meaning to what has been read.

2. Standardized reading tests may be utilized to determine reading levels of students. These tests indicate which types of errors to count when the student reads sequential selections to the teacher. The following are counted as miscues: not being able to identify a word, hesitating on recognizing words, substituting words, omissions made, mispronounciations, and repeating words that were pronounced accurately. Comprehension questions covering the content read need responses from learners to evaluate comprehension. By following the manual, a teacher knows how to administer and appraise results from the test. Appropriate materials may then be located based on results from the standardized test in determining reading levels.

In Summary

There are numerous means available to appraise student progress in reading.

1. Using teacher observation to determine weaknesses and then offer remediation work to overcome deficiencies.

2. Using checklists to mark which objectives a pupil has achieved. Observations need recording to notice specifically what needs emphasis in lessons and units.

3. Using diverse teacher written test items, such as multiple choice, true-false, essay, matching, and completion.

4. Using criterion reference tests. The criterion are the measurably stated objectives which students are to attain. Either a student has or has not achieved the objective. If a learner did not attain a specific end, a new teaching strategy then needs to be utilized.

5. Using standardized tests to notice progress in reading. Validity and reliability are two relevant concepts to emphasize when standardized tests are used to measure learner achievement.

6. Using rate scales. On a five point scale, the teacher may appraise students achieving general objectives in the reading curriculum.

7. Using anecdotal records. The teacher systematically needs to record and date representative reading behaviors of each student to notice a pattern of progress.

8. Using conferences with learners and with parents to discuss means of improving reading experiences for each student.

A comprehensive program of appraisal procedures needs to be utilized to determine each student's attainment of understandings, skills, and attitudes in reading. Learning activities can then be chosen to guide students individually to achieve relevant goals and objectives in the reading curriculum.